

Briefly noted

News in the [December 1, 2009](#) issue

Campaigners against restrictions on people living with HIV and AIDS have welcomed the October 30 decision by President Obama to remove entry restrictions to the U.S. based on HIV status. “Ending discriminatory policies and confronting stigmatizing attitudes toward people living with HIV and AIDS are essential for their full inclusion in society and religious communities,” said Bishop Mark S. Hanson, president of the Lutheran World Federation, a member of the Geneva-based Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance which has campaigned against the restrictions. Since 1987 HIV-positive travelers and immigrants have been banned from entering or traveling through the U.S. without a special waiver. “The United States will now join the vast majority of nations that do not restrict travel by people who have tested HIV positive,” said Hanson, who is also the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in a separate statement, urged “all other countries with such restrictions to take steps to remove them at the earliest.”

The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina has voted to begin withdrawing from some governing bodies in the Episcopal Church in protest over the denomination’s approval of same-sex blessings and gay bishops. While the diocese did not secede from the Episcopal Church, as four other dioceses have done in recent years, it did take similar steps, including declaring certain churchwide policies “null and void” and reducing participation in church governance. Bishop Mark Lawrence, whose diocese includes an estimated 30,000 Episcopalians in the southeastern part of South Carolina, said the moves on October 24 were necessary to fight the “false gospel of indiscriminate inclusivity.” At its national convention last summer, the Episcopal Church voted to lift a de facto ban on gay and lesbian bishops and approved a broad local option for same-sex blessings.

The Lutheran World Federation has elected a 48-year-old Chilean pastor as general secretary of the global church group that includes more than 68 million Protestants worldwide, including nearly 5 million in the U.S. Martin Junge becomes the first representative from Latin America to hold the highest position in the secretariat at the LWF. The election was announced October 26 following a closed

session of the LWF's main governing body that took place near Geneva. Junge will succeed Ishmael Noko, a Zimbabwean theologian who became general secretary of the Lutheran grouping in 1994 and was re elected for a second term in 2004. Junge will take up his post following the next LWF assembly in Stuttgart, Germany, in July 2010.